

# WASHINGTONIAN

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**Saturday, 7:30 PM**  
**Gross National Product**

## It's a Funny Town

Who Says You Can't Find a  
Good Laugh in Washington?

By Randy Rieland



Mixing skits of political satire with improvisational theater, Gross National Product has become a fixture at the Bayou in Georgetown every Saturday night. Its members also are guides for the Scandal Tours that visit infamous local places.

Night Two begins with a swing back into political satire at the Bayou in Georgetown, the Saturday-night home of Gross National Product (202/783-7212). Like the Capitol Steps, this troupe is based on the notion that on any given day, a powerful person in Washington is capable of doing something ridiculous. Its role is to remind us of how ridiculous.

Instead of relying on music to get its message across, GNP sticks to skits, a number of them revolving around John Simmons, the group's Bush impersonator on both this show and on its Scandal Tours buses. His opening monologue is delivered with a classic Bush expression suggesting extreme gastrointestinal discomfort and is thick with malaprops—"A kinder, gentile nation" and "I catastrophically deny that."

Other skits round up the usual suspects—Dan Quayle, Ted Kennedy with an adolescent "friend," the Democratic party (tweaked in a board game called "Democratic Nominee," in which the winner gets to suffer a 49-state blow-out). Another routine presents a Soviet laxative called "Coup-Rectal," which is guaranteed to work "in under 63 hours" and "purge your whole system."

This may not sound like the most inspired material, and some of it isn't. It works because the troupe is full of good comic actors who, like the politicians they skewer, know delivery is everything.

But the parts of the show I enjoy the most are when the GNP turns to improv, the times when, in spirit, they least reflect Washington. No TelePrompTers, no scripts, only their wits. For several moments we, the audience, are a group of people in Washington witnessing spontaneity. I feel forever bonded.

The best routine comes when the troupe, working from a list of audience suggestions, performs the story of Rapunzel. As the tale shifts from a Shakespearean version to a Woody Allen version to a *Soul Train* version to a Weather Channel version, I think I have discovered the future of cable TV.